

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Clint Mehall on 10/11/11.

The application has been amended as follows:

- Claims 8, 12 and 13 are canceled.
- Claim 1: In line 18, directly after the term "cladding" and directly before the term "and", insert the following language:
 - o "; wherein the second cylindrical portion of the inner portion of the lower plug has a diameter of between 40% and 60% of the inner diameter of the tubular cladding and a length in the axial direction of between 8 and 10 times the inner diameter of the tubular cladding;"
- Claim 11: In line 18, directly after the term "cladding" and directly before the term "and", insert the following language:

- “; wherein the second cylindrical portion of the inner portion of the lower plug has a diameter of between 40% and 60% of the inner diameter of the tubular cladding and a length in the axial direction of between 8 and 10 times the inner diameter of the tubular cladding;”

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences reversed the rejection of claim 8. The examiner's amendment adds the limitations of claim 8 into independent claims 6 and 11. Thus, per the Board's decision, the amended claims are allowed.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled “Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance.”

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ERIN M B LEACH whose telephone number is (571)270-5378. The examiner can normally be reached on Tuesday - Friday 11:00 AM - 9:00 PM EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jack Keith can be reached on (571) 272-6878. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3663

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/E. M. L./

Examiner, Art Unit 3663

/JACK KEITH/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3663